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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel Brighton
on Sunday morning 31 May 1925

PSALM 130 v 6

"My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they
that watch for the morning: I say, more
than they that watch for the morning."

Between the infinite and glorious Jehovah and man, and perfect happiness, there is only one thing, that is sin. Between the Creator and the creature there is necessarily an infinite distance, but no disagreement. Between God and a sinner there is the infinite distance, and there is the terrible disagreement, and unless this disagreement can be honourably removed no happiness, no heaven for us. Can it be removed? Is sin removable from a sinner? Is sin separable? Is it so removable, so separable, as that it can consist with the honour of God to permit a sinner to approach Him, and not to permit only, but to actively deal with that sinner so as to bring him in reconciliation into union and fellowship with Him. The man who baulks the question is unconcerned about God and about himself, and the sinner to whom the question is vital, and who not only says, Can I be made happy? but Will God, can God save me consistently with His honour? he is well concerned, rightly concerned, and has his eye on the right object.

The Psalmist, in this Psalm, is deeply concerned about this one evil, only evil, for indeed there is but one evil in the world, and in hell, and that is sin. Punishment is not evil; though an evil to the sinner, in itself it is not so. The Psalmist was concerned about this one thing, sin. It plunged him into the depths, it oppressed his spirit, it distressed him, it held him down, it was before him, it was in him. But one thing was with him beside this evil, and that was grace. One Person, to speak so, was with him to help Him; the Holy Ghost, He came alongside of him and helped his infirmity, taught him how to pray, caused him to pray, dictated his petitions, set his eyes on the Redeemer, the promised Messiah who was to come, and seeing this

promised Messiah, looking forward to the promised Word of God which could not be broken, looking forward through the sacrifices of the Levitical dispensation, he saw the blood of the everlasting covenant, the Redeemer, the Intercessor, and so he prayed. Left alone with sin, left alone with your convictions of sin, you will never pray. Sin properly turns us from God. Conviction of sin, in itself, properly shuts us up, shuts us out from God. Properly operating on the mind, it produces despair, but because the Lord will not let the pit shut her mouth on His people, He gives them His good Spirit who helps their infirmities, tells them to pray, teaches them how to pray, sets their eyes on the Redeemer, and so out of the depths, the depths that threaten to close in upon the soul, the depths of sin and guilt; out of those depths, the sinner cries. "Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee, O Lord". If any of you are on high ground of ungracious confidence, of religion not wrought in you by the Lord, may He plunge you into those depths. This is the way to heaven. No sinner is saved by being ignorant of his ruin. No sinner will ever enter heaven unconscious of the hell he deserves to be cast into. Happy the man who believes this. The Apostle Paul was alive without the law in its authority in his conscience. "... I was alive without the law once". (Romans 7 v 9) Suddenly there came to him such a blow, such a stroke, such a piercing of the sword, such a voice of the law, and such a sight of himself, as killed him. "...when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died". He lost his Pharisaism, his goodness, his blamelessness in the law, and he became a sinner. And this is what must be the case more or less distinctly with everyone who is to know the Redeemer in the efficacy of His vicarious death.

In sin there are these three things known to everyone born again.

First, the guilt of sin, which is death. "Sin revived and I died", died by the law. This presses the soul into the depths, it is a weight on the conscience, a millstone tied round the sinner's neck.

The second thing is the pollution of sin. This separates from all that is holy. God is holy; pollution separates from Him.

The third thing is its power in the soul. It spreads itself, it influences every faculty of the soul, warps the will, blinds the understanding, represents, or misrepresents, things so as if possible to deceive, and drive, and hurry, and lure the sinner into the ways of sin, into the paths of destruction, and down into the chambers of death.

What are you to do with these three things, that is with sin? Everyone realising what sin is, what it is to commit sin, to be guilty, to be polluted, to be weak in the hand of sin, desires, and is enabled to desire, and constrained to pray, and taught to pray by the Holy Spirit, and there is then earnestness. The sinner is earnest. It is a matter of life with him or death. Can I escape from this pit? Is escape possible? May such a sinner come out and come forth to the praise and the glory of God? May my conscience be eased? Can it be? He is in earnest. The Psalmist here uses a simile. He looks at the watchman. A cold, dark, terrible night, and the watchman must keep awake, and he watches for the morning, cranes his neck to the east, and strains his eyes to catch the first gleam and dawn of day, because he knows when the morning comes his vigil ends. And so, says the Psalmist, even more than the watchman, more eagerly, more earnestly, and with a greater object in view, I watch; I wait for the Lord. You may have a great quantity of religion, but none of this eager waiting. In this waiting is the very spirit of expectation. As the watchman expects the morning, so a waiting soul, at times, has expectancy. Waiting for the Lord, hoping, and even believing that He is coming.

Let us look at these two things together, as enabled, sin and waiting, and it spells this. I wait for the forgiveness of my sins. "There is forgiveness with Thee that Thou mayest be feared", and this is whispered in the soul at times by the Holy Spirit. This is seen to be in the Lord Jesus, as that blessed One in His vicarious death is set forth by the Spirit. This is hinted at in the soul by the Scriptures, by the gospel; the glorious gospel of Christ shines into the heart and understanding and it says - "All manner of sin and blasphemy against the Son of Man shall be forgiven". It says: "They that seek shall find, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened". And thus speaking in the heart the Lord causes a sinner to come with

these two things. A waiting spirit, waiting for the forgiveness of his sins. There is a point in this. The sluggard desireth and hath nothing; it is too much trouble to him to take his hand out of his bosom to convey meat to his mouth. He desireth and hath nothing. Sleepy, sluggish, only wanting a little more slumber, a little more sleep, and so his poverty comes like one that travelleth and his want as an armed man. (Proverbs 24 v 34). Not so, this sinner. He says to all to whom he may speak about it, I want the Lord. I need, and seek forgiveness of all my sins. I have, I can have, no rest with sin on my conscience, with sin unremoved. Whether it be in the first conviction, or in after days, it is the same in the essence of it. The sinner says, I want, if I may have, this guilt removed from my conscience. Waiting, being silent to the Lord, means that you are just shut up to Him; with no other refuge, no other source of life, or supply, you are just shut up to Him. And the waiting soul is earnest, anxious, speaks his confessions, lays his petition before the Lord, and uses the arguments which the gospel affords him; for, though it is difficult for unbelief, yea impossible for unbelief as unbelief, to lay hold on this, yet still it is true that the gospel affords an argument with God, an argument which the Almighty God cannot disregard, cannot turn away. A short breath suffices to say that, but there is an infinite, a glorious, a blessed truth in it that, entering the heart as an experience, means heaven. God can forgive sin. "With Thee there is forgiveness". There is forgiveness. Think of it. Yea, O sinner, lying low in affliction for guilt, and pressed down by guilt, look at this - There is forgiveness. We have sinned; it is God's blessed prerogative, through Jesus Christ, to take away guilt from the conscience, and the sinner waits for it. Look at the watchman, cold, and shivering, eagerly looking to the east, saying, O when will dawn break, when shall I see the first beams of the morning? And the sinner, blessed with grace, and the teaching of the Spirit, looks to the throne of God's heavenly grace, to the gate that looketh toward the east, and says, O when will the Lord speak that to me that I earnestly desire, that I seek? When will the Lord speak forgiveness? Now if any of you have this particular case, may the Lord fix your eyes on Himself as He is in Christ, fix your attention on the vicarious atonement of Christ. Let nothing draw you aside from this, because with guilt on your conscience you cannot be happy. No amount of help from creatures will avail here. The one thing is the blood of

the everlasting covenant sprinkled on your conscience. I say then, let nothing distract you and turn you from this. With the Lord there is forgiveness. Forgiveness? Forgiveness contains much. It contains the removal of guilt, it contains the cleansing of all the pollution, it contains the subjection of sin, the breaking of its dominion. Forgiveness? It is a cup of happiness, the cup of salvation; it is the smile of God. It is a summer of heaven's blessedness on the soul. Forgiveness? It is the Lord's embracing the sinner, telling him it is well with him. O sinner, are you waiting for this? This is the one thing needful, it is the door opening into heaven, it is God's coming down from heaven into the heart. It is the sweetest voice that ever can be heard in the soul. Forgiveness, it is a joyful sound.

This waiting has in it these things, first humble, sincere confession. Look at the 51 Psalm, it will embrace you if you are a sinner in your own sense of things; it will hold you. "Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin". I was born in sin, I was shapen in iniquity. I have lived in sin; I have done that which is evil. Now I am killed. The commandment has come to me and I see that I am utterly wrong, and altogether ruined, and lost in sin. O pardon. Do you confess? Is confession part of your breath, your very life, as it were? Guilty, guilty, guilty. Can you rank yourself with the publican? Would you think it an honour to stand by the side of the praying thief on the cross? Would you think it great if God gave you the mercy of humbly confessing, deeply, daily, constantly confessing, with abhorrence of it, your sin? There is in this waiting pleading and arguing. How is it that with the Lord there is forgiveness? The Son of God bore away sin and made an end of it by the sacrifice of Himself. And faith is at times strengthened to plead this, to urge it upon the notice of God who always sees it, but the sound of pleading is pleasant to Him, when you plead what His Son has done, that He put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. And faith, getting hold of this, gets hold of God, and will not let Him go. It is one of the most pleasing things that the Lord sees in His poor, sin-oppressed people, pleading, arguing, wrestling, on the ground of the atonement of the Lord Jesus. If you have these two things in you, your attitude toward God is this: "My soul waiteth for the Lord". I said just now that there is expectation in this waiting. Do you not

sometimes find it so? Now and again there may be such a sense of God's kindness to sinners, such a view of His willingness to save, that you cannot be silent to Him. Once a sinner, always a sinner in himself, but O, says he, I fain would be a saint. I would remain one by Him who causes people to be saints, and who makes them so by the infusion of His grace, by the gift of His Spirit, and by the application of the atonement of the Saviour. Guilt removed is the great object of a praying person who is under a sense of guilt. Ah it is no easy thing, notwithstanding what one has said, it is no easy thing to wrestle, and argue with God; and for this great reason, that the sense of sin that is had by the sinner is such as to make him feel that there is in him everything to bring out God's judgements to the uttermost, and he needs faith in exercise that will say to all that he sees in himself, and feels, now these, though as to their object are infinite; this guilt, as to its object being against God, is infinite; yet the atonement of Christ is more. These sins are finite, as done by a sinful man, but the atonement is infinite as made by the God-Man, Jesus Christ. Now that strengthens faith, that mightily strengthens faith, and enables a sinner at the first, and all through his days, to plead what Christ did on the cross. Do you thus wait for God?

In this waiting there is more or less from day to day, directness. The watchman did not consciously turn his face to the west in the night, for he knew that the sun goes down in the west. He turned to the east. And there is a directness in the sinner when praying by the Holy Ghost, and he turns to that One who only can forgive. You understand this. Sin, legality, the tempter, will turn your eyes away from this point if allowed. One day you get your eyes turned to yourself, and you find yourself saying, O I could pray if I were repentant; I could pray if my heart was soft; at least I would try. You find yourself saying, O if I only loved the Lord Jesus, then I could pray. Another time you say, If I were sure that I was sincere, then I could go, and you do not at all perceive, at the moment, that what you are doing is this, trying to get a bit of ground out of your sincerity, out of your repentance, out of a broken heart, on which to stand before God. It wont do. Everything that you want to have in yourself and wish you had, by which you might feel some encouragement to pray, will be no more than mire, and mud, and you will sink into it,

and find no standing. O, but is not a broken heart good? Yes, put in its right place; beautiful. Is not sincerity right? Yes, and necessary, but in its right place. Forgiveness comes to a sinner. Forgiveness comes to a sinner as such. Repentance flows from grace. Sincerity is the effect of grace. Contrition is the effect of grace. May the Lord save us from putting under our feet, or attempting to do, these things as a ground which we must have as an effect of forgiveness. The enemy may distract you, or attempt to distract you, and bewitch your eyes by turning them to self, or to something that you might do, but the one thing eventually in the Psalmist's case, and certainly in every case where the Spirit is at work, is this: "Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee O Lord". A lost man. Jesus came to save the lost. A greater truth than we are apt to think. It means more than we are apt to think. Half lost? No, that wont do. "Sin revived and I died". A dead man, dead by the law, dead to the law, and the law dead to the sinner, so that now he is in a case for God to deal with, a totally different ground from that on which he has been hitherto standing, and on which the Lord dealt with him when he killed him. When the Lord kills a man it is by the law that the man has broken. And so he died. When God comes to forgive a sinner it is on quite another ground, the ground of the gospel, Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ in His Person in heaven between God and sinners. Jesus Christ in His work putting away sin absolutely by the sacrifice of Himself. That is the ground. And so, if you bring something of your own, you bring that which was under the law, and God will never deal with you kindly on that ground. But when dead to the law, and the law dead to you by the body of Christ, then will come this great, wonderful, hardly expected blessing, yet sometimes looked for - Forgiveness; the removal of guilt. Then the sinner may find himself saying, Now the thing that was between me and heaven is gone; the thing that was between me and communion with God is gone; the thing that filled me with misery, and made happiness apparently impossible to me, is removed. I am happy, all is well. Out of the depths he comes. Said the Psalmist in the 40 Psalm, I cried unto the Lord, and He brought me up out of an horrible pit, He set my feet upon a rock, the rock Christ Jesus. Sinner that is how you must come out of the pit if the pit is not to shut her mouth upon you. No price; only death, only guilt, only ruin. "The Son of Man came to save that which was lost". Well, this is liberty; when you get it this is liberty, sweet, holy

liberty, and it is very wonderful to consider and still more to feel, that when this mighty thing is done, this thing that is impossible with men, but possible with God, the forgiveness of sin, the removal of guilt, there is no reason in God, no reason in the sinner, why these two should not be friendly. No reason. You say, O but I am full of sin. That, in this case, is no reason. Justification clears the sinner, alters his state, takes him away from the law, puts him into a new state entirely, so that in this new state there is no reason why the God who has made it, and the sinner who is the subject of it, should not come together in friendship. You might ask for a proof of this great assertion, and if you do I can give it you, and will give it you. "Henceforth I call you not servants but friends". Is Jesus Almighty God? Yes. Has He taken away sin? Yes. Has He sent His Spirit with His atonement into your heart so as that your guilt is removed? Yes. Then what is there between Him and you? What is there to hinder friendship? Abraham was the friend of God. Abraham, My friend, says the infinitely condescending God. Abraham My friend. Have you walked in the street in Brighton, or any other place, with God in your heart? You are His friend. Have you walked your room, have you been on your bed, and the Lord Jesus has been with you? He is your friend. You are His friend. Abraham My friend. This comes by the atonement, this comes in the covenant, this comes by the removal of guilt from the sinner, changing his state. Objective. Subjective in the soul's happiness, yes indeed it is. O, but I am a sinner. Grace reigns. Now let me again say, have you this point? Be diligent. Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure. Salvation is of grace, and complete, and when the Apostle Paul would show that he says: "For whom He did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son.....Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified." (Romans 8 v 29/30). That settles it. But when it is subjective, that is, when it is to be an experience, and is an experience, says the Apostle Peter: "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure" because election is evidenced by calling. "Holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling". Now how will you have this made out to you? By being enabled diligently to wait on God, saying to Him repeatedly: "Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation". I say again, this path is beset with difficulties, this waiting is

attended by many distractions, special distractions that come out of your own heart because you are a sinner, and because, being alive to God, you are conscious of the enmity in your heart against Him. Who can fully express all the distractions of a sinner who is waiting on God for the removal of his guilt, for the change of his state, for his justification? No-one can fully express them. You fix your eyes on your corruptions, and down you sink. You look at your failures, and say I am undone. You see your broken vows, and say they never can be made good. You see your wanderings away from God, and say I am always with my back on Him. It is most difficult in experience to form and hold a good judgement of your state when indwelling sin asserts itself, most difficult. But God is sufficient for this. One of the greatest blessings of the gospel brought to a sinner is the gift of the Holy Spirit, who teaches, and enables, and strengthens and directs the soul to this one point, this grand point - Forgiveness. This will bring you out of the depths; you will be a changed person in your experience; you will say, I am not the same. I was blind, now I see; was dead, now I am alive. The law was against me, now it does not oppose my justification, my happiness. A changed person. Be diligent that you may be found of Him in peace, poor sinner. And if the Lord helps you to believe this, though your sins rise to the heavens in their guilt, though they crush you by their power, though they separate you from God by their pollution, the atonement is sufficient, quite sufficient to change all; I say, if your attention is thus fixed, you will say, I wait for the Lord; I want Him. Yea, and sometimes you may say, I even think I love Him. I love Him. Love in the smoke is wonderful if it be love to God, love to the Lord Jesus. I believe a sinner is very acceptable to God who can say: How sweet the Name of Jesus sounds to me. It is a great Name, and when the Spirit expresses it into the heart, it is a wonderful Name then; ointment poured forth, sweetness made known; condescending love, omnipotent pity, kindness in the Saviour, and all this will help, does help, is intended to help, given for the very express purpose of helping, a sinner to continue in this attitude: "My soul waiteth for the Lord".

Now I have taken all the morning in speaking on this one point, and if it be a means of directing the attention of any of you to this one point - mind the point, mind the Object - it will not have been in

vain. Look to this one point, and think, if you can, that anything, and everything, and all things, that distract your attention from this point, are evil, and to be avoided, even though, in another way, at another time, some of those things will be good, but they are evil when they come to turn your heart away from this singleness, this waiting, this point in your soul. I like points in religion and so does everybody who is under the grace of God, and this one grand essential, all embracing point, I may say of it, the removal of guilt from your conscience. Conscience, that hungry faculty, that friend of God, that condemns you as a sinner; that friend of yourself that tells you the truth, and tells you matters are not straight between you and God; conscience, so upright, so sincere; conscience, so instructed as to know that nothing short of the atonement can do; that conscience can only be properly, fully satisfied, and contented, by the atonement of the Saviour brought home by His good, patient Spirit who loves to magnify Him in sinners. Come then with me, fellow sinner, a fellow in conviction, a fellow in ruin, come to this blessed One who says: "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." May the Lord help us to do it, for, doing this, being in this way, we shall find Him coming to us and saying in His own good time: "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt"

AMEN.